

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached replacement drawing sheet (6/6) makes changes to Figs. 6(a) and 6(b) and replaces the original sheet with original Figs. 6(a) and 6(b).

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-18 are pending in this application, claims 15, 17 and 18 having been withdrawn from consideration. By this Amendment, the specification, FIGS. 6(a) and 6(b) and claims 1, 7, 10-13, 15-18 are amended, and claim 2 is canceled. Support for the amendments to claims 1, 7, 10-13, 15-18 can be found, for example, in original claims 1, 2, 7, 10-13, 15-18 and in the instant specification at page 24, lines 23 to 25. No new matter is added. In view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 2, 8-10 and 13 contain allowable subject matter.

Objection of the Drawings

The Office Action objects to Figs. 6(a) and 6(b) for not being labeled as prior art. By this Amendment, FIGS. 6(a) and 6(b) are amended to include the legend "Prior Art." Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection are respectfully requested.

Amendments to Specification

By this Amendment, the specification is amended for clarity and to correct grammatical errors discovered upon further review of the application. No new matter is added.

Claim Objections

The Office Action objects to claims 1, 7 and 16 (and dependent claims 2-6 and 8-14). By this Amendment, claims 1, 7 and 16 are amended in accordance with the Examiner's helpful suggestions, thus obviating the objections.

Claim 2 is canceled, rendering the objection moot as to that claim. Claims 3-6 and 8-14 are objected to solely for their dependency from claims 1 and 7.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 11-13 (and dependant claims 2-10 and 14) as indefinite under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. By this Amendment claim 2 is canceled, rendering the rejection moot as to that claim. As to the remaining claims, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

The Office Action asserts that claim 1 is indefinite for reciting "having a given diameter dimension." By this Amendment claim 1 is amended to recite, "having a constant diameter dimension" (emphasis added). Applicants submit that amended claim 1 is definite.

The Office Action asserts that the recitation "a molding material" or "the molding material" in claim 11-13 presents antecedent basis issues. Claims 10-13 are amended to obviate the antecedent basis issues.

Claims 3-10 and 14 are rejected solely for their dependency from claim 1.

For the foregoing reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 3-7, 14 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Japanese Document 63-3910 to Nakagawa et al. ("Nakagawa"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

By this Amendment, claims 1 and 16 are amended to incorporate the features of claim 2, which the Office Action indicates contains allowable subject matter. Accordingly, amended claims 1 and 16 are allowable.

Claims 1 and 16 are allowable over Nakagawa. Claims 3-7 and 14 depend from claim 1 and, thus, are also allowable over Nakagawa. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action rejects claims 11 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Nakagawa in view of U.S. Patent 6,806,337 to Schlueter et al. ("Schlueter"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

As indicated above, by this Amendment, claim 1 is amended to incorporate the features of claim 2, which the Office Action indicates contains allowable subject matter. Accordingly, amended claim 1 is allowable.

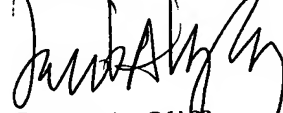
Claim 1 is patentable over Nakagawa and Schlueter. Claims 11 and 12 depend from claim 1 and, thus, also are allowable over Nakagawa and Schlueter. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1 and 3-18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:NAB/nab

Attachment:
Replacement Drawing Sheet

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